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# <Obituary> Professor Toshisada Nishida : Chief Editor of Pan Africa News

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## <OBITUARY>

### Professor Toshisada Nishida: Chief Editor of *Pan Africa News*

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Dr. Toshisada Nishida, Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University and Executive Director of the Japan Monkey

Centre, passed away in Kyoto on 7 June, 2011. He was 70 years old. For the last five years of his life, he fought against rectal cancer and pursued his professional life as a primatologist to the very end.

Prof. Nishida was best-known for his pioneering research on the wild chimpanzees of the Mahale Mountains, Tanzania. The project, now called 'Mahale Mountains Chimpanzee Research Project' (MMCRP), is the second-oldest ape field study, preceded only by Dr. Jane Goodall's Gombe project. When only a 24-year-old graduate student, Prof. Nishida was dispatched to Mahale in 1965 as



Moshi Hamisi (Left), Prof. Nishida (Center), and Rashidi Kitopeni (Right). At Kansyana, on 27 August 2009. Photo by Kazuhiko Hosaka.

part of the late Prof. Junichiro Itani's grand-scale project to investigate the wild chimpanzees of western Tanzania. He succeeded in habituating the Mahale chimpanzees by giving them sugarcane and banana (Food provisioning was abandoned in the mid-1980s).

In 1968, he published the first empirical report<sup>1</sup> on chimpanzee social structure and introduced his idea of the 'unit-group' (also referred to as 'community' by many researchers), in which chimpanzees interact with each other on the basis of stable membership in closed structure.

Joined by many excellent field-workers, such as the late Profs. Kenji Kawanaka and Shigeo Uehara, Prof. Nishida contributed substantially to primatology in the international arena by publishing so many peer-reviewed articles about chimpanzees that I cannot go deep into detail here (but see other obituaries coming soon in several primatological journals). He also edited academic primatology books in English<sup>2-4</sup>. For the last decade, he was enthusiastic about video-recording chimpanzee behavior, which yielded a definitive ethogram of the Mahale chimpanzees<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, he devoted much energy to conservation. Together with the late Prof. Itani, he organized a campaign to make Mahale a protected area. Their efforts were realized in 1985, when Mahale was designated as a national park of Tanzania.

In 1994, he collaborated with Prof. Hosea Kayumbo, University of Dar es Salaam, to found the 'Mahale Wildlife Conservation Society' (MWCS), and he served as its co-chairman. He not only made efforts to conserve wildlife within the park but also endeavored to initiate community-based conservation in villages north of the park. Believing that education of local children and improvement of public hygiene are vital to wildlife conservation, he negotiated with the Embassy of Japan in Tanzania for Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects and successfully built Katumbi Primary School (2003) and Katumbi Dispensary (2011).

He extended his passion for great ape conservation on a global scale. In 2001, he was appointed one of the five UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Special Envoys for Great Apes and later served as a GRASP (Great Apes Survival Project) patron.

He also served as President of International Primatological Society (1996–2000), President of Primate Society of Japan (2001–2005), and Editor-in-Chief of the scientific journal, *Primates* (2004–2011).

He won the Jane Goodall Award (1990), the Leakey Prize (2008), the International Primatological Society Lifetime Achievement Award (2008), and the Chunichi Cultural Prize (2010).

*Pan Africa News (PAN)* was launched in 1994 by Prof. Nishida, who agreed with Dr. Goodall's advice that field-workers studying wild *Pan* species at various field sites in Africa needed a forum in which to exchange early scientific findings and useful information about conservation. I remember the initial days, in which I discussed the role of *PAN* with him and Dr. Linda A. Turner, who edited the first issue. In 1997, Prof. Nishida set up the editorial board and launched the peer-review system for this journal and served as its Chief Editor until his death.

On 30 January, 2011, Prof. Nishida, who was facing the final stage of his illness, called in Dr. Michio Nakamura, Associate Professor of Kyoto University, and me, in order to talk about handing over his work. He asked Dr. Nakamura to act as the new organizer of MMRP, adding that we should continue our long-term study of Mahale chimpanzees for at least a century. Then he asked me to take over his duties as co-chairman of MWCS and Chief Editor of *PAN*.

After that day, he shifted his attention to the publication of his last book<sup>6</sup>. He stressed that this would be his first English-language book about Mahale chimpanzees for general readers, although he had written many books for the Japanese public. His work was well-known to primatologists, but less so to the international general public. Thanks to the generous dedication of Prof. William C. McGrew, University of Cambridge, the book will appear at the end of 2011.

He was involved with higher education at the University of Tokyo (18 years) and Kyoto University (15 years). Under his supervision, many biological anthropologists and primatologists were trained and are pursuing their careers in various disciplines, as well as chimpanzee research.

To be frank, it is hard for me to accept the reality of his death, owing to still-vivid memories of his final journey to Mahale, when he observed his beloved chimpanzees in the forest for the last time (I accompanied him there in August 2009). Personal recollections of his legendary accomplishments in the field will be gathered and shared among his friends and colleagues in a future special issue of *PAN*.

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